

The Albany HERALD

By Jennifer Maddox Parks
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A veterans service organization with Albany ties held several events throughout the day Monday.

ALBANY, Ga. — A banner in the dining hall of American Legion Post 512 signified the mood of the day — “We are proud they came this way” — with a listing of all the United States military branches: Navy, Coast Guard, Army, Marine Corps and Air Force.

Both of Albany’s American Legion locations, Post 30 and Post 512, held programs throughout the day Monday in acknowledgment of Memorial Day.

“This day commemorates all the men and women who died during military service for the U.S.,” said Charles Slaughter, 1st junior vice president of Post 512. “Many people see it as the start of the summer, many see it as a sales day and many see it as a family day. A lot of places are closed.

“We are here to honor those that made the ultimate sacrifice.”

Rep. Sanford Bishop, D-Albany, has his own routine that he follows each year. On Sunday he

made a visit to the cemetery on the Andersonville National Historic Site for a wreath laying ceremony. He also visits Veterans Park and the eternal flame outside the Dougherty County Courthouse in downtown Albany.

Every time this holiday comes, Bishop thinks of someone he grew up with by the name of Thaddeus Williams. His plane was downed in 1966 while serving for the Army in Vietnam, and his remains were eventually found about 30 years later.

He made an address at the Post 512 Memorial Day 9 a.m. program.

"Today we remember those from all of our wars who paid the ultimate price," Bishop said at the event. "This is a time that we let our children know that freedom is not free and people continue to pay the price.

"We owe them our dedication."

Williams is currently buried at Arlington National Cemetery.

Gubernatorial hopeful David Poythress and his wife Elizabeth Poythress were also at the program.

"This is a day of observance, not celebration," David Poythress said. "They (fallen servicemen) gave their lives for all of those that call themselves Americans. That's what they've sacrificed for."

Bishop also appeared at Post 30's 6:50 a.m. program. Post 512 held a barbecue for the public at 3 p.m., and Post 30 hosted a dinner for World War II veterans at 5 p.m.

House District 150 Rep. Winfred Dukes was also among those in attendance at Post 512's observance.

Bishop is a member of the House Appropriations Committee and Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans Affairs and co-chair of the Congressional Military Family Caucus. Information available from his office indicates that more than 770,000 veterans are living in Georgia. Since 2001, 55,528 of the state's residents have deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan. Of those, 172 soldiers have lost their lives and 1,101 have been wounded.